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A-ONE #1140   10/02/09

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->From the Editor's Keyboard   "Saying it like it is!"
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""

Phew! Another long week has come and gone. Can you believe that we're
already in October? It's true, look at a calendar! It feels later in
the year, but I don't want to really go there! Seriously though, this
is a really nice time of the year. I hope that we're finally able to enjoy
one of this year's seasons!

Anyway, it's been another tiring week at work. 30-35 hours on your feet
every week can be exhausting; I don't know how the "full-timers" manage
to do it week after week!

So, I'm planning to rest up this weekend, and the weekend has started!
so, let's move along - there's a lot of great stuff in this week's issue
just waiting for your interested eyes!

Until next time...

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                 Updated GFA-BASIC Library Released

Ok here it is, finally ready. This actually brings with it a new compiler
and linker. If you don't read the docs please note that the components of
this archive must not be mixed with older versions.

I've been working on this for a very long time and it contains 127 updated
modules. The library is now interrupt free, and hopefully bug free. See the
docs for a very long list of changes and corrections.

List of features:

Mostly bug fixes and enhancements.
No radical changes to the library for maximum backward compatibility.
Enhanced CPU/FPU support for machines with an 020 CPU or better
(optional).
Unused code removed.
This library is actually smaller than the original library.
Improved MiNT compatibility.
Some small optimizations were done as well.

Line-A use only where it should be used.
Improved error handler with advanced debugging options.
Break key can now be cleanly used in compiled applications.
EVERY/AFTER are now cleanly implemented.
Improved hardware detection for STE only commands.
All vector hooks removed (except $B+ which is optional).

If you have any problems or the docs are unclear, please let me know. I'll
do my best to help.
Enjoy.

Grab it here: http://gfa.atari-users.net/ftp/download.php?fn=gfa_comp.zip

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http://www.bright.net/~gfabasic/ [GFA-Basic, AtarIRC, Hades060, FreeMiNT]

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                      PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                    compiled by Joe Mirando
                       joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors! It looks like we may finally have a couple
of message threads to talk about this week, so things are looking up.

I'd like to say thanks to those of you who emailed to ask how my medical
tests had turned out. It's good to know that there are those out there
who not only read this column, but pay attention too. [grin]

For those of you who may not know, last week I had a rather strange
physical problem. My right hand and forearm were numb and weak and pretty
much useless for about three hours last Monday. When it didn't return to
normal quickly, I ended up going to the Emergency Room. I tried my
favorite walk-in clinic, but they wouldn't see me for it, since
diagnosing what might be a stroke or TIA would be very difficult without
the proper equipment.

I got into the ER and got checked out in fairly short order; EKG, blood
work and a CT scan about 20 minutes later. There were nurses and doctors
and orderlies enough that the whole ordeal, including getting the results
of the EKG, CT scan and blood work, took slightly less than two hours.

Luckily, all the results were very encouraging, showing that I had not
had a stroke. My guess as of now is that I somehow compressed the nerve
in my neck that goes to the hand and forearm. I'm hoping that a few
sessions with my chiropractor will fix that. But my point here is that if
it HAD been a stroke, there were meds at the ready, waiting for 'the
word'. Blood thinners, clot busters, etc., all ready for when there was a
need. Luckily, I didn't have the need.

So when we start talking about health care reform I say, as you've heard
me say before, we don't NEED health care reform. We have the best health
care in the world. When a small hospital in a little town in suburban New
England has the technology and resources to do the things that need to be

done in a situation like that, there ain't nuthin' wrong at all with
health care.

What we NEED is health care INSURANCE reform. A way to pay for all these
wondrous things that allows everyone access to them. And, no, it's not
just health care insurance either. It's the whole cost structure.
Everything is just... well, too expensive. It starts with the doctors'
and hospitals' malpractice insurance and carries all the way down to the
cost of an aspirin, to the prices the drug companies get for drugs to the
astronomical cost of all this new high-tech equipment.

The health care 'paradigm' has changed. But we are still trying to pay
for it the same old way. The result is what we're seeing now:
Skyrocketing costs.

What we need is a new way of thinking about the health care industry and
the insurance industry.

A lot of the debate around reform (not the silly stuff about 'death
panels' or funding abortions or 'rationing') is about how we pay for it..
the numbers that are being thrown around are assuming (conveniently) that
the government will be heavily involved in paying at least part of
everyone's health care.

Yeah, it'd mean an added tax every week, along with Social Security and
FICA, but think about it... IF you got sick or needed emergency
treatment, there would be a backstop... a safety net to make sure that
you had every possible chance to both recover and not have to worry about
losing your house... everything you have... just to pay medical bills.

Don't get me wrong, there are things I'm not sure, of and things I don't
like about each of the bills I've seen so far, but we've got to do
something. The current system just isn't working the way it should, and
it's unstable at best. Half-measures just aren't going to do it. We can't
be afraid to take that first, bold step toward something new and possibly
better. If it does turn out to be the wrong step, we can start again.
We've done it before... back when we weren't afraid to take a chance at
something better.

Well, that's my take on it. Let's get to the news, hints, tips and info
from the UseNet, shall we?

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Jean-Luc Ceccoli posts this about his EtherNAT ethernet board:

"A few weeks ago, one of my 2 EtherNATs broke down.
Then, I switched with the one on my second machine, that I only
turned on when needed to backup the main one.

Since then, the second EtherNAT has been working very often, and
then started becoming unstable, making the system hang while file
transfers from/to the PC, just like did the previous one before
it stopped working.

I've sent the first board to Sweden to repair, and I hoped it
could be fixed before the second one would stop working too.

Unfortunately, the second board decided to fail yesterday, while transferring some important files to my PC.

After a couple of retries, I gave up, unplugged the board, plugged the old EtherNEC back in the ROM port, replaced the EtherNAT driver with the EtherNEC's one, and then could access the net again.
I am very angry that those very expensive boards only worked a few months - less than a year, in fact, because it took some months from the time I got them and the one I decided to switch from MagiC! to MiNT so I could use them -, while older less expensive boards still work fine after many years (at least 5, IIRC).
Well, in fact, I had to switch down the MoBo from 25 to 20 MHz for the computer to boot with the EtherNEC. Otherwise, it would reboot again and again after copying the TOS in RAM.

But, now, file transfers last very long, at only 11~18 kb/s, where they reached up to 140~180 with the EtherNAT.

So I am wondering if the driver I use (Enec6.xif) is the good one.
Do some of you there use EtherNEC with CT60/63'ed Falcons?
Which driver do you use?"

Jean-Francois Lemaire tells Jean-Luc:

"I use ne2kenec.xif from Odd Skancke:
http://assemsoft.atari.org/ne2k/index.html

Boy, am I glad I didn't buy an EtherNAT... "

Jean-Luc replies:

"Many thanks! works fine now!"

Miro Kropacek adds:

"This is a little bit unfair. You're probably one of TWO cases when I've heard their ethernats have some problems... two cases from hundreds! I don't understand why are you crying here, spreading words like that and don't send those (from your point of view) faulty devices to Nature guys asking them for fix / explanation / test if it's REALLY ethernat issue and not your falcon/ct60/whatever."

Pioter Mietniowski asks about problems he's having with his Eiffel interface:

"I have some problem with my Eiffel interface, I do not know why, but sometimes (not [always]) when the system crashed and I have to reboot the computer, I have information Keyboard failure on the screen during boot computer. And the the keyboard and mouse may not work, but sometimes nevertheless keyboard and mouse work fine. Similarly when reboot computer again return to good work and on the screen I have information "Keyboard OK". Does anybody know what is the reason?"

Alan Hourihane tells Pioter:

"No [I don't know what the trouble could be], but a few more details...

Is this on a Falcon? CT60? bus accelerated? any more details about
your system?"

Pioter replies:

"Yes I used only clean CT63 without bus accelerated."

Alan asks:

"What version of Eiffel are you using?...

Oh, and what version of the CT63 flash are you using?"

Pioter replies:

"Here I have a problem. I bought from my friend a I don't know what is
version. How Can I see which version I have?

When I run computer on the screen is information:
Boot v1.03c 2005 July"

Alan tells Pioter:

"n the CT60 control panel you can select the "New boot" method for your
hard disk. That will then show the Eiffel version.

You can get the latest released one from Didier's pages at...
http://pagesperso-orange.fr/didierm/eiffel-e.htm

It's the 1.10 firmware. You can flash that to the device with the tools
that Didier provides."

Pioter replies:

"Sorry I did not understand you earlier I have made earlier and I used
the newest version of the firmware 1.10.

I use firmware 1.10 but the problem repeat again. For example
yesterday I shutdown normally the system (MiNT) and everything it was
OK, but today when I run the computer I saw the Keyboard Failure. I
don't know why. What can I do?"

Alan tells Pioter:

"You could try going back to the "Old boot" method and therefore you
don't get the "Keyboard ..." messages at all."

Well folks, that's about it for this week. Tune in again next week, same
time, same station, and always be ready to listen to what they are saying
when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - PSP Go Arrives!
   """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Pinball Hall of Fame!
                                     PS3 in Theaters?

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
   """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

               PSP Go Arrives, Sony Launches 100 Games

Sony's disc-free $250 PSP Go games handheld rolls out to retail today,
and as expected, the company's nearly doubled the amount of PlayStation
Store games content. Sony's digital shelves now include Polyphony
Digital's fresh PSP-exclusive Gran Turismo racer, dozens of newly
downloadable PSP games, and a smattering of the company's debut PSP
'Minis' - bite-sized titles priced in the $5 to $10 range.

The Store's topped up larders coincide with PSP firmware update 6.10,
which launched overnight and adds "full compatibility" with Sony's
Windows-based MediaGo mobile synchronization utility, a new music
application called "SensMe" that auto-organizes your music based on a
proprietary Sony algorithm, and a "tethering" option that allows you to
use a Bluetooth mobile phone (or similar device) to link your PSP to the
Internet.

Conspicuously absent? MediaGo Mac support. Sony's PSP sync software
works in Boot Camp mode, of course, but - speaking from personal
experience - the software won't detect the PSP running Windows in
emulation software like Parallels.

What's in the store? Gran Turismo PSP ($40), God of War: Chains of
Olympus ($16), Daxter ($16), Resistance Retribution ($32), MLB 09 The
Show ($32), and that's just half of SCEA's titles. Poke around and
you'll find stuff from Activision, Atari, Capcom, Codemasters, EA,
LucasArts, Rockstar, Sega, Square Enix, THQ, Ubisoft, among others. If
I'm counting accurately, it all adds up to 95 new PSP games, 7 debut PSP
minis, and four new PSone classics. Check out the official PlayStation
Blog breakdown for the list in full. Movies and TV shows aside, it's the
biggest content overhaul Sony's made to the games section since the
service debuted.

The downside? A lot of stuff's missing, like the PSP version of Final
Fantasy Tactics, the remakes of Final Fantasy's 1 and 2, Final Fantasy

VII: Crisis Core, and Metal Gear Solid Portable Ops. I still play those on disc, meaning I'm stuck dual-wielding handhelds until Sony works out whatever licensing, retail, or scheduling issues are holding them up.

Reactions on Sony's Blog have been generally positive this morning, though they range from "This is pure win" and "Best update ever; There's so much I want," to snippier comments like "These prices are comical; PSP Minis are extremely overpriced" and "Wow look at the price of those PSP games; you can buy them cheaper on UMD."

Pinball Hall of Fame - The Williams Collection

This collection of 13 pinball tables offers more than enough variety to justify the price that you pay for infinite credits.

Specifications: ESRB: Everyone 10 and older ; Genre: Pinball
Price range: $29.49

Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection was a great package when it was released for the PSP and the Wii last year, and now that it has arrived for the PlayStation 3, it's better than ever. Even if you already own one of the older versions, this one is well worth checking out, not only because the tables look really good in high definition, but also because there are more of them. An extra three tables have been added to the virtual arcade that serves as the game's slightly unwieldy menu system, bringing the total to an impressive 13. Not all of the featured tables can be considered
classics, but if the lineup was chosen specifically to offer plenty of variety, then it's most definitely a success. Older tables like 1970's Jive Time bear little resemblance to the likes of Whirlwind and Funhouse, which were released 20 years later, and playing through this collection in chronological order is a fun way to see how Williams' offerings evolved during that time.

Pinball Hall of Fame - Tales of the Arabian Nights is arguably the best of the three new tables.

The moment you step into the virtual arcade that serves as the game's menu system, it's clear that The Williams Collection's goal is to re-create as accurately as possible the experience of visiting an arcade to play pinball. You can choose to practice on tables in a mode that awards you tokens based on your scores and the completion of table-specific goals; you can play against up to three friends in tournaments that span up to seven different tables; or you can take on the time-consuming Williams Challenge. This mode challenges you to achieve target scores on 12 tables one after another, and doing so is the only way to unlock the 13th table for regular play. You get three attempts at each table, and if you fail at any point, you have to go back to the first table again. The scores aren't overly tough to beat once you learn your way around the tables, but it would be a good idea to practice on any tables that you're not familiar with before embarking on the challenge.

Regardless of which table you're playing, you'll find that Pinball Hall of Fame's controls are flawless. The shoulder buttons are clearly a great fit for activating the left and right flippers, and the analog sticks are good for launching balls and for tilting the tables. The

flippers on these tables never feel unresponsive or sticky, as their real-life counterparts sometimes do, but realism is definitely the name of the game, and the all-important ball physics are nigh on perfect. Furthermore, the tables' various targets, bumpers, slingshots, switches, and ramps are every bit as believable as the ball that you're trying to hit them with, which ultimately makes The Williams Collection's gameplay difficult to fault.

If you feel the need to, you can easily change the camera angle by tapping the circle button while you're playing. Cameras can be problematic in pinball games, but the dynamic (or "smart") cameras used here masterfully display the whole table and zoom in on areas when it's appropriate to do so. All five of the camera options work in the same way, so choosing between them is akin to deciding how tall you'd like your invisible avatar to be when he stands at the table. You can play from so low down that you feel like a kid standing on tiptoes with the flippers right in front of his face, or from so high up that you're afforded something close to a bird's-eye view of the entire table.

Like last year's versions of the game, The Williams Collection on the PlayStation 3 supports up to four players who must take turns. There's no option to play simultaneously against friends online, which is unfortunate given how much fun the ad hoc play of the PSP version is, but new online leaderboards make trying for high scores significantly more compelling than it was in last year's games.

Pinball Hall of Fame - Head upstairs in the virtual arcade to find this gem of a table from 1997.

All of the tables in Pinball Hall of Fame look and sound authentic, right down to the labels detailing how much it costs to play and how many balls you get for a single credit, and the loud knocking sound when you earn an extra ball. It's not always easy to see where some of the table features are because the artwork on raised areas blends in with that on the playfield, but these rare moments of confusion aren't detrimental to gameplay since they generally occur at the top of the table where you don't have to worry about losing a ball. If you find this particularly bothersome on a specific table, switching to a different camera angle will also often solve the problem.

Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection doesn't have a lot of competition, so saying that it's one of the best pinball games currently available for the PlayStation 3 wouldn't count for much. With its great selection of tables and believable physics, this is one of the better pinball games to be released for any platform in recent memory, though, and while it's significantly more expensive than a ZEN Pinball </959425> download, your money goes a lot further and it's still a lot more affordable than a real table.

                    Sony To Unveil New PS3 Game Title in Theaters

Video gaming will hit the big screen next month when Sony Corp unveils a new game title for its Playstation3 game console at movie theaters.

On October 5 and 6, four theaters in San Francisco and Thousand Oaks, California, Rosemont, Illinois and Bellevue, Washington, will give viewers a chance to play the upcoming action game "Uncharted 2: Among

Thieves" title - on movie screens equipped with Sony digital-projection
technology.

Those theaters will provide viewers with PS3s connected to Sony's 4K
digital cinema technology, which is in about 500 theaters nationwide and
which Sony says provides better image resolution than traditional
projectors.

Mike Fidler, senior vice president of Sony Electronics' Digital Cinema
Solutions and Services Group, hopes events like this can eventually
drive revenues for Sony, video game makers as well as theater operators.

"This is the first time we're doing it in a theater. We think it's a
start of something for us, and hope we can build this into a standard
element in the movie-going experience," he said. "Our goal in converting
theaters to digital is to go beyond the traditional movie-going
experience and focus on helping exhibitors find ways to fill seats."

"Gaming will be an important part of that equation."

The first night will be a private invitation-only event, while the
second event will be open to the public, to be publicized through radio
and social networking sites.

Theater chains have struggled to sustain revenue growth as home
entertainment and the recession entices some moviegoers to stay home.
And Sony, like other game console makers, is hoping for a hit title this
holiday season to drive platform sales as the industry grapples with a
protracted decline.

Both Sony and Microsoft Corp, the maker of the rival XBox 360, have
recently slashed prices on their consoles. Sales of video game equipment
and software in the United States fell 16 percent in August to $908.7
million, the industry's sixth consecutive monthly decline, research
group NPD reported.

"Uncharted 2" is due to be released October 13.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

U.S. To Add Up to 1,000 Cybersecurity Experts

US Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said Thursday that her
department has received the green light to hire up to 1,000 cybersecurity
experts over the next three years.

"This new hiring authority will enable (the department) to recruit the
best cyber analysts, developers and engineers in the world to serve
their country by leading the nation's defenses against cyber threats,"

Napolitano said.

Kicking off "National Cybersecurity Awareness Month," she said the new recruits would "help fulfill the department's broad mission to protect the nation's cyber infrastructure, systems and networks."

"Effective cybersecurity requires all partners - individuals, communities, government entities and the private sector - to work together to protect our networks and strengthen our cyber resiliency," Napolitano said.

She said the cybersecurity experts would fill a number of roles including cyber risk and strategic analysis, cyber incident response, vulnerability detection and assessment, intelligence and investigation, and network and systems engineering.

Napolitano said she does not anticipate needing to fill all of the 1,000 positions but their availability demonstrates the commitment to building a "world-class cyber organization and compete for cybersecurity talent."

President Barack Obama, in a proclamation declaring October to be National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, said "cyber attacks and their viral ability to infect networks, devices, and software must be the concern of all Americans."

"In the Information Age, the very technologies that empower us to create and build also empower those who would disrupt and destroy," he said.

"My administration is committed to treating our digital infrastructure as a strategic national asset," Obama said.

"Protecting this infrastructure is a national security priority, and in the process, we will ensure that these networks are comprehensive, trustworthy, and resilient."

Increasingly, States Push for E-waste Recycling

Frustrated by inaction in Congress, a growing number of states are trying to reduce the rising tide of junked TVs, computers and other electronics that have become one of the nation's fastest-growing waste streams.

Nineteen states have passed laws requiring the recycling of old electronics, which contain both precious metals and toxic pollutants and are piling up in garages and closets - or worse, getting dumped overseas. Thirteen other states are considering laws.

But as these state measures take effect, the electronics industry is pushing back against what it calls a hard-to-follow "patchwork."

Two trade groups, the Consumer Electronics Association and the Information Technology Industry Council, are suing New York City over its recycling law, which will make electronics manufacturers provide free collection of electronics weighing more than 15 pounds. That includes "orphan" waste made by now-defunct manufacturers.

The groups contend the law, which requires detailed paper trails

documenting their recycling, will cost their member companies more than
$200 million annually.

Parker Brugge, the Consumer Electronics Association's vice president of
environmental affairs and industry sustainability, said the states' laws
burden manufacturers with drafting state-specific recycling plans. His
group would prefer a national e-waste law that sets a uniform policy and
spreads the responsibility of recycling among companies, consumers and
local governments.

Barbara Kyle, national coordinator of the Electronics Takeback
Coalition, a group that promotes e-waste recycling, thinks manufacturers
really want a national policy with less teeth than the state laws.

"They talk about how much they want a federal bill, but what they want
is a weak federal bill. They don't want to have to do what the state
laws are making them do," she said.

Several e-waste bills have been introduced in Congress over the years
but none has passed.

In April, the House authorized the Environmental Protection Agency to
award grants promoting e-waste recycling. The Senate has not yet voted
on it.

Meanwhile, the amount of e-waste grows. In 2007, Americans disposed of
2.25 million tons of TVs, computers, cell phones, fax machines, printers
and scanners. That's more than twice the amount generated in 1999,
according to the EPA.

Less than a fifth of e-waste overall is recycled, which allows for the
copper, silver, gold and other precious metals inside to be salvaged and
resold. Landfills get many of the rest of the discarded devices, which
also have toxic hazards lurking inside - from lead in TVs and computer
monitors with cathode-ray tubes to cadmium in rechargeable batteries.

The EPA says stringent landfill regulations keep those toxic materials
from posing significant threats to the nation's groundwater. But
millions of tons of e-waste are shipped each year to developing nations,
where scrap yards crush or burn components, exposing workers to
dangerous fumes.

Most of the state e-waste laws make electronics manufacturers
responsible for collecting and recycling their discarded products at
little or no cost to consumers - who increasingly are being banned from
setting electronics out for regular trash pickups.

Some of the laws specify how convenient companies must make it for
people to dispose of old electronics, while others set collection goals
companies have to meet.

Companies are generally given the flexibility to decide how they will
reach those targets. They can stage periodic collection events, for
instance, or they can count products collected by their own recycling
programs or ones run by municipalities and nonprofits.

About half the states require electronics manufacturers to handle not
only their own products but also varying amounts of the "orphan" devices
that consumers drop off, said Jason Linnell, executive director of the
National Center for Electronics Recycling.

Only one state, California, makes consumers pay upfront for e-waste recycling. Under its law, consumers must pay between $8 and $25 above the price of TVs, computer monitors, laptop computers and portable DVD players.

Last year, California paid $96 million collected from that fee to recyclers and collectors who handled about 218 million pounds of old electronics, said Chris Peck, spokesman for the California Integrated Waste Management Board.

In April, Indiana became the latest state to pass an e-waste law. It requires makers of TVs, monitors, and laptops to recycle 60 percent of the weight of the products they sell each year in Indiana.

Beginning next year, companies must register with the state, pay annual fees and file reports detailing the devices they sold and how much e-waste they funneled into recycling programs. Companies face fines if they don't meet the 60 percent goal.

Minnesota's similar 2007 law led to about 34 million pounds of electronics - some 6.5 pounds for each state resident - being collected in its first year, said Garth Hickle, the product stewardship team leader for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

One 2007 collection event at the Mall of America had to be cut short after organizers were overwhelmed by people hauling in about 1 million pounds of electronics that had been cluttering their homes.

"Some people waited in line for two hours to drop off material," Hickle said. "That just shows you that if the collection options are there, people are ready to get rid of this stuff."

Bob Davis' home and garage in Lake City, Minn., were stuffed with more than 30 old PCs and parts from his days repairing computers. Last year, Davis, 62, finally rounded them up and hauled them to a recycling business that is part of Minnesota's system.

"My wife was always yelling at me, 'When are you going to get rid of this stuff?'" Davis said. "I'd say, 'Well, when I find a place that will take it.'"

House Members Seek Ways To Stop Internet Bullying

House members struggled Wednesday for a way to stop Internet bullying of children without violating free speech.

Bullying has always been mean-spirited, but a House Judiciary subcommittee was told that federal law does not make it a crime to engage in "cyberbullying" that becomes destructive to its young victims. The worst examples resulted in child suicides.

Rep. Linda Sanchez' bill would make severe electronic bullying a crime, defined it as repeated, hostile and severe communication made with an intent to harm.

Sanchez, D-Calif., named her legislation the "Megan Meier Cyberbullying

Prevention Act" in honor of a 13-year-old Missouri girl who hanged herself in 2006.

Meier was the victim of an internet hoax by an adult, Lori Drew, whose conviction under a computer fraud law was tossed out. The judge cited vagueness of the law, which does not involve cyberbullying, and the chance that innocent Internet users could become subject to criminal charges.

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Fla., took a different approach in proposing a new federal assistance program. Competitive grants would allow nonprofit Internet safety groups to work with schools and communities to educate them of online dangers.

Sanchez told the committee, "I want to acknowledge how difficult it will be to craft a prohibition on cyberbullying that is consistent with the Constitution. But I also believe that working together for our children, we can and must do so."

She said annoying e-mails, political blogs and an unfriendly text to an ex-boyfriend should remain legal, while serious, repeated and hostile communications made with intent to harm should be a criminal offense.

"I believe that we can protect our right to free speech and victims of cyberbullying at the same time," she told the Judiciary subcommittee on crime, terrorism and homeland security.

Missouri already has taken action, passing a law that cyberbullying can be charged as a felony if a victim is 17 years or younger and the suspect 21 or older.

The Missouri law was sparked by the Meier case, in which Drew sought to humiliate the girl by helping create a fictitious teen boy on the MySpace social networking site. The fake boy told Megan the world would be better without her.

John Palfrey, of Harvard Law School, said a task force he led in 2008 left open the question of whether bullying is on the rise.

"It is quite clear that more young people are bullying one another than ever before via digital technologies," he said. "What is not clear is whether this replaces any traditional, offline forms of bullying.

"It could be that bullying is neither up nor down as an overall trend, but rather just shifting venues ... "

Palfrey chaired the Internet Safety Technical Task Force, which brought together 29 companies, child advocacy groups and academics.

Judi Westberg Warren, president of Web Wise Kids, said her nonprofit, online safety group favored education programs. She cautioned that it would be a challenge to impose criminal sanctions that would survive constitutional scrutiny.

"Many actions that would fall under the definition of cyberbullying are not criminal," she said. "It is also important to separate actions of kids versus actions of adults. Any legislation considered must be careful to avoid criminalizing youth-to-youth communications."

Future Firefox 4.0 Could Feature 'App Tabs'

Mozilla periodically refreshes its wiki page with what might called public brainstorming of future ideas. In its latest refresh, the popular browser's developers have posted a number of ideas that they're considering for Firefox 3.7 and Firefox 4.0 (above). In a nutshell: simplify, simplify, simplify.

"Firefox feels dated and behind on Windows," the developers have written. "Especially Vista and Windows 7. These issues include absence of Glass, anemic purple toolbar color on Vista, tall and bulky UI footprint, element overload, inconsistent toolbar icon usage/style, lack of a tactile look & feel and perhaps too great of a divergence between the look on XP and Vista/7."

Some of these changes have been discussed before: combining the "go/stop/refresh" buttons into a single element; using a neutral tone, and embracing the design motifs that Aero Glass and other Windows design elements allow.

But there are also a couple of other interesting design ideas: eliminating the menu bar, and killing off the "home button". The latter one is actually the most interesting . "The home button at present functions pretty much exactly like a bookmark," the wiki notes. "Yet it has its own dedicated place in the default set of toolbar buttons. It's not entirely useful and takes up prime real estate.

"For 3.7 we would like to create a "Home Tab". Moving the functionality of the home button to a persistent "mini-tab". This tab, for 3.7, would just take you to your homepage. Any links clicked on this page would spawn a new tab. This would serve as a good introduction to tabs for users not accustomed to them."

Personally, I wouldn't mind seeing Mozilla's take on an "iGoogle" home page; it's an obvious conclusion. Oddly enough, the "Home Tab" seems to appear only on Mozilla's mockup for Mozilla 4.0, which appears at the top of the page. Here's an early design for Mozilla 3.7:

Firefox 3.7 Phase 1.JPG
<http://us.rd.yahoo.com/dailynews/zd/tc_zd/storytext/244498/33558662/SIG=12dfi1m
ap/
*http://www.appscout.com/assets_c/2009/09/Firefox%203.7%20Phase%201-5328.php>

You can see the design team's direction. It's not set in stone, however: the design is "at the UX team proposal stage, to be approve[d] by drivers and subject for constructive community feedback".

You may not even notice the other change: hiding the menubar. Like Vista, the Mozilla team wonders whether you need to see "File Edit History..." all the time. But there's another change hiding there, too: the elimination of bookmarks, which normally might be accessed via the menu, hitting CTRL-B to bring up the sidebar, or other means. Mozilla may replace bookmarks with a "widget": "create a bookmarks "widget" that replicates the bookmark menu functionality and place that on the bookmarks toolbar," the developers suggest.

The revisions for Mozilla 4.0 are even more provisional, as the new browser would be farther out, naturally. But there's a nifty new concept

on the drawing board.

You probably have a number of Web pages you refer to on a frequent basis throughout the day: Gmail, Twitter, maybe another Web service or two. If you're like me, you cue up a series of tabs and assign them to a specific grouping, or maybe a whole new window. Mozilla proposes that those Web services (call them apps) be pinned to a portion of the screen, so that users would be able to quickly access them.

Other changes are equally subtle. For example, at the top of your browser window at title probably announces the Web page. But the tab you're browsing in does too. Mozilla may eliminate the full title bar from the very top of the screen, letting the tabs serve that purpose. Honestly, I'm not sure that makes sense for someone who surfs with a dozen tabs or more, all open. Likewise, Mozilla proposes combining the search bar and address bar into a single field, which isn't so revolutionary.

Firefox won acclaim first for its security, and later for its ability to extend its functionality via plugins. We'll have to see if a simplified layout continues to help Mozilla cut into Internet Explorer's lead as the most popular browser.

Microsoft To Release Free Antivirus PC Software

Microsoft Corp. says its new computer security program can be downloaded starting on Tuesday.

Microsoft Security Essentials, as the free antivirus software is called, has been available in a beta test version since June.

The software updates daily to stay current with the latest malicious programs, which can steal passwords or turn PCs into spam servers. Microsoft says it won't make computers run slower.

Microsoft has said it isn't out to steal business from companies like McAfee Inc. and Symantec Corp., which make popular antivirus programs with more features. Microsoft says it hopes the free program will appeal to people who don't already run antivirus software.

Microsoft's Free AV Looks Good in New Test Results

Microsoft's new free Security Essentials looks like it can get the job done, according to new scanning tests conducted by AV-Test.org.

The free standalone antivirus product has caused a stir since its Tuesday release, as might be expected when the words "Microsoft" and "free" are involved. In a post on the day of its launch, I referenced AV-Test performance results from a MSE beta. We now have new results from tests conducted this week against the final product (available for download), and overall MSE looks good:

Malware detection: MSE detected 98.44 percent of AV-Tests's collected zoo of 545,034 viruses, worms, backdoors, bots and Trojans, an entirely

respectable showing. However, it didn't do nearly as well when it came to detecting adware and spyware, such as bank info stealers, and detected only 90.95 percent of the 14,222 samples.

As expected, MSE detected 100 percent of the samples in the Wildlist. Most reputable AV apps detect all the Wildlist samples.

Dynamic/behavioral detection: If a program includes behavioral detection, it can identify malware based solely on how it acts on a PC. It's a useful feature for detecting brand-new malware that doesn't yet have a signature.

AV-Test found that MSE doesn't include any effective behavioral detection. However, AV-Test's Andreas Marx noted that's typically the case for standalone antivirus programs, and that you'll generally need to buy a security suite to get the feature.

Or, you can pair your free or paid standalone AV program with PC Tools' free Threatfire, which adds an impressive layer of behavioral detection to your security arsenal.

Disinfection: MSE was able to clean up all of the active components from 25 different test infections, meaning the malware was effectively neutered. As is usually the case, the program often left behind some traces of the infection, such as registry entries or a turned-off Windows firewall.

Rootkit removal: MSE did well here. It identified and removed all 25 rootkits (stealth technology used to hide other malware) used in the tests.

Scan speed: When I compared the MSE beta to other free (and finished) AV apps over the summer, it came in last for scanning speed. In these latest tests, Marx says that MSE scan speed "is quite OK when compared with other AV products" - not the fastest, but not the slowest.

False alarms: Security Essentials didn't put up any false positives for any of 600,000 known clean files used by Windows, Office and other common apps. However, as Marx notes, most of those files come from Microsoft, so a false positive would have been surprising.

Overall, these results show that Security Essentials holds its own as a free standalone antivirus app. As with most other options in that category, it doesn't provide a firewall, behavioral detection, or other security extras. But since Vista and Windows 7 already include a two-way firewall, and you can add top-notch behavioral protection with another free app, MSE looks like a good budget choice for baseline antivirus protection.

Finally, if you're interested in a good business-side opinion piece on Microsoft's move, take a look at this post from Sunbelt's Alex Eckelberry.

Patent and Publishing Links Stir Apple Tablet Speculation

A newly revealed patent application and a new burst of rumors are providing more support to reports that Apple is planning a

groundbreaking tablet computer. The application describes new forms of multi-touch interaction, and the rumors describe secret talks that Apple is having with newspaper and textbook publishers.

According to a report Wednesday in the tech blog Gizmodo, Apple is currently "aiming to redefine print" and is in the process of negotiating content with publishers for a new device. Various industry observers have predicted that Apple will release a tablet computer later this year or in early 2010.

The blog quoted sources connected to The New York Times as saying that Apple approached that paper in June, and a textbook publishing source reported that McGraw Hill and Oberlin Press are getting ready to offer textbooks on iTunes.

In addition, Gizmodo reported, magazine executives have been visiting the company's headquarters in Cupertino, Calif., to discuss the future of interactive publishing.

Sarah Rotman Epps, a media analyst with industry research firm Forrester, said there "absolutely" is an opening in the publishing market for Apple to create a groundbreaking device, not unlike the opening in the music market that resulted in iTunes.

"If Apple launches a touchscreen device," she said, "it could very well be a killer application for interactive reading material." Epps said the distinction is whether digital publishing means "providing a convenient substitute for print," such as Amazon's Kindle offers, or if it means "reinventing reading," with new experiences that are not possible with the Kindle.

Epps pointed out that novels don't need video, color or interactivity, but magazines and textbooks could certainly benefit. She noted that content providers, such as Simon and Schuster and Disney, are beginning to explore ways to distribute existing books through digital means, as well as to create new forms of reading. But the device to redefine reading is not here yet, she said.

Michael Gartenberg, a vice president at Interpret, said Apple hasn't often created a category, but has been extremely successful at redefining a category, as it did with the Mac interface, the iPod, iTunes and the iPhone.

At the same time that reports continue trickling in about Apple's meetings with publishers, a new patent application has come to light in the last week. Originally filed in June, the application seeks a patent for an "apparatus and methods" that will track two-handed multi-touch interaction on "a proximity-sensing" surface.

The device using such patented approaches would, according to the application, allow "unprecedented integration of typing, resting, pointing, scrolling, 3-D manipulation, and handwriting" into a single device. Potentially, this kind of two-handed interaction could replace or at least supplement input from a stylus, a mouse, a keyboard, or voice recognition.

Needless to say, the patent application is stirring imaginations as to what Apple might have in mind if it does launch a tablet computer.

ICANN Drops U.S. Ties To Embrace Global Community

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers has ended its
decade-long arrangement with the U.S. Department of Commerce. The move
gained applause from the European Commission, which had called for ICANN
to consider a system run by the private sector.

On Wednesday, the day ICANN's contract with the Department of Commerce
was to expire, ICANN announced an "Affirmation of Commitments." It's a
commitment for all the parties involved to have a continued relationship
with the U.S. government and to conduct periodic reviews of the
organization, its accountability, and its transparency.

In the past, those reviews were submitted to the U.S. government under
the Joint Partner Agreement. Under the new relationship, reviews will be
developed by an international committee chosen by the chairman of
ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee. The committee represents 100
nations around the world, the CEO of ICANN, and in some cases ICANN's
chairman.

"So what it really means is, we're going global," said ICANN CEO Rod
Beckstrom. "All the reviews and all the work done will be submitted for
public comment to the world. And the United States, just like every
other country, will be a recipient of that information through the
publication of result."

Viviane Reding of the European Union Commission for Information Society
and Media asked ICANN in May not to renew its deal with the U.S.
government.

"Internet users worldwide can now anticipate that ICANN's decision on
domain names and addresses will be more independent and more
accountable, taking into account everyone's interests," Reding said. "If
effectively and transparently implemented, this reform can find broad
acceptance among civil society, business and governments alike."

Private businesses and organizations, including VeriSign, Google and
NetChoice, are also applauding the decision.

"VeriSign commends the Internet Corporation on Assigned Names and
Numbers and the Department of Commerce the 10 years of work by both
parties toward the evolution of governance around the domain-name
addressing system," said VeriSign CEO Mark McLaughlin. "We are
encouraged that the new proposed agreement by ICANN and the U.S.
Department of Commerce will allow for more international participation
in the policy creation at ICANN and expand ICANN's efforts as technical
coordinator of the domain-name addressing system to ensure a robust and
secure Internet."

"Google and its users depend every day on a vibrant and expanding
Internet," said Google CEO Eric Schmidt. "We endorse this affirmation
and applaud the maturing of ICANN's role in the provision of Internet
stability."

In addition to moving to the affirmation agreement, ICANN has also
decided to support different scripts and languages in domain names.

"The Internet is becoming more global because today you have to type dot

com or a dot extension that has English-like or Latin characters, what we call ASCII," Beckstrom said. "In the near future we will be rolling out Chinese, Russian and different languages."

Secret Service Probing Facebook Poll on Obama

The U.S. Secret Service is investigating an online survey that asked whether people thought President Barack Obama should be assassinated, officials said Monday.

The poll, posted Saturday on Facebook, was taken off the popular social networking site quickly after company officials were alerted to its existence. But, like any threat against the president, Secret Service agents are taking no chances.

"We are aware of it and we will take the appropriate investigative steps," said Darrin Blackford, a Secret Service spokesman. "We take of these things seriously."

The poll asked respondents "Should Obama be killed?" The choices: No, Maybe, Yes, and Yes if he cuts my health care.

The question was not created by Facebook, but by an independent person using an add-on application that has been suspended from the site.

"The third-party application that enabled an individual user to create the offensive poll was brought to our attention this morning," said Barry Schnitt, Facebook's spokesman for policy.

Because the application was disabled, the responses to the nonscientific polls are not available.

"We're working with the U.S. Secret Service, but they'll need to provide any details of their investigation," Schnitt said.

Texas Governor Blames Web Campaign Flop on Hackers

The kick-off for Texas Governor Rick Perry's 2010 re-election campaign was marred Tuesday by a Web site outage that staffers are now calling a denial-of-service attack.

Perry had invited supporters to visit his campaign Web site at 11:30 a.m. Central time on Tuesday to attend a 10-minute online rally billed as "Talkin' Texas." Instead, site visitors were rebuffed with a computer error message.

"Today's 'Talkin' Texas' Webcast by Gov. Perry was deliberately interrupted by a denial-of-service attack, preventing countless users from logging in to view the Governor's remarks," the Perry campaign said in a note posted to its Web site. "This planned and coordinated attack was political sabotage, and we are working to identify those responsible for this illegal activity."

Before the site crashed, more than 22,000 visitors were able to access

the event, the Perry campaign said.

But according to local coverage of the incident, the outage did not entirely resemble a distributed denial-of-service attack, (DDoS) which renders the server extremely slow or inaccessible to most visitors. Instead, Austin's KXAN reported that the site displayed the message "Unable to connect to database server," generated by the Drupal content-management platform.

Although he is not familiar with the particulars of Tuesday's outage, Trend Micro security researcher Rick Ferguson said that the Drupal message appeared to indicate that the Perry server was misconfigured rather than attacked via DDoS. Drupal would not have been accessible during a successful DDoS attack, he said via instant message. "If it was a DDoS, you'd never even get to the main page."

According to a report in the Houston Chronicle, however, the Perry campaign's Internet service provider said that it was hit by what's known as a SYN Flood DDoS attack.

Politicians are often quick to blame hackers for technical glitches. During the 2006 Connecticut Democratic Senate primary Joseph Lieberman blamed a Web outage on an attack by supporters of his opponent, Ned Lamont. An investigation into the matter found that Lieberman's server had failed because it was overutilized and misconfigured.

Perry replaced former Texas governor George W. Bush, following his presidential election in 2000. He is seeking his third full term as governor.

Two Romanians to Face Phishing Charges in US

The U.S. Department of Justice has extradited two Romanians to the U.S., where they face charges in connection with a massive phishing scam.

The two men, Petru Belbita, 25, and Cornel Tonita, 28, are accused of setting up fake phishing sites designed to steal user names and passwords from the Web customers of Citibank, Wells Fargo, eBay and other financial institutions.

Victims would receive e-mails or text messages that looked like they came from legitimate financial institutions, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark Aveis. "You'd of course freak out and be concerned that your account was under attack," he explained. "You'd click a link and that link would take you to what you thought was a legitimate [bank] site."

In fact it was a fake site. And once the phishers had this information, they'd send it to U.S.-based "cashiers," who would manufacture fake ATM cards with the information. They would then hand over those cards to "runners" who would go from ATM to ATM withdrawing money.

The Romanians preferred to work with runners located in the U.S. because they had more ATMs to choose from, Aveis said.

The phishers and the cashiers would meet in online "carder" Web sites to buy and sell stolen IDs, Aveis said.

A third alleged co-conspirator, Ovidiu-Ionut Nicola-Roman, also of
Romania, became the first foreign national convicted in the U.S. of
phishing. He was sentenced to more than four years in prison in March.

All of the charges stem from a May 2008 phishing sweep by U.S.
authorities that led to charges against about 40 people, all with ties
to international organized crime, according to the U.S. Department of
Justice. More than half of those involved in the alleged conspiracy are
still at large, most of them in Romania, the DoJ said.

Cyber security experts say that Romania has been a top source of
phishing for the better part of the past decade. In 2006 the U.S.
Federal Bureau of Investigation's Cyber Division dispatched six FBI
agents to Bucharest to work with Romanian National Police. Last year the
FBI conducted two phishing crackdowns, including the May 2008 action
that led to Belbita's and Tonita's charges.

The two men now face more than 30 years in prison on the charges.

Belbita was arrested in Montreal on Jan. 24 and extradited to the U.S.
on Friday. Tonita was arrested in Dubrovnik, Croatia, on July 18 and
extradited on Sept. 4. Both men have pleaded not guilty to the charges.

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